

Salem Lamartine 11:00

8/25/68

*Processional Hymn 249
*Call To Worship Page 203
*Confession of Sin
*Assurance of Pardon
*Scripture I Kings 22; 1- 40
*Gloria Patri
*Apostles Creed
*Pastoral Prayer
Anthem 480
Announcements

Billy Graham Sept. 7th (Sat.) 7:30

CHOIR PRACTICE WED. 7:30

Offering, Response, Prayer

Hymn 394

Sermon

Prayer & Lord's Prayer

*Hymn 232

*Benediction

*Threefold Amen

*Postlude

In God We Trust

Text: I Kings 22: 6c

'March', they replied 'Yahweh will deliver it into the power of the king.'

Our text for this morning may seem rather remote and far removed from reality, but it serves a purpose which we shall see very shortly. Have you ever stopped to ponder the motto, "In God We Trust,"? Or perhaps the portion of the pledge to allegiance to our flag, "One nation under God"? We maybe have heard them so often they have lost their real worth to us, and yet do they really mean what they are implying or saying? Before we answer that I think we should take a look at this Old Testament lesson to see some of the background behind it.

The Scripture for this morning pointed out the last chapter in the troubled life of king Ahab. At the time of this story, he had secured for his kingdom three years of peace because of the victories he had won over Syria. But Syria had kept the town of Ramoth in Gilead and refused to give it up. This had troubled Ahab and he was convinced that he should do something about it. Now the occasion had arisen and he saw glorious victory for Israel and glory for himself. This was the first time a king of Judah had come to the capital of the kings of the kingdom of Israel. Jehoshaphat was wealthy, prosperous and very successful in the wars he had fought and Ahab saw his chance to use him. But individually the little kingdom of Israel or the little kingdom of Judah could not stand a chance against Syria. But together they could. Now to sort of bind the union together it was proposed that the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, Athaliah by name, would marry the son of Jehoshaphat, and his name was Jehoram. Now it is not certain about the dates but it is thought by interpreters that it was in this connection that these two kings got together on this occasion.

The difference between the two men was the fact that Jehoshaphat was a pious and religious man, and Ahab was a sly scheming conniving man. So when Ahab proposes his plan Jehoshaphat inquires just what would Yahweh, or God say about this. So Ahab trots out about four hundred of his very special prophets and like the parrots that they were they said that the venture had God's blessing and would succeed. Jehoshaphat appears to not be too impressed with this legion of prophets,

and inquires if perhaps there was not a more legitimate prophet to consult. He probably knew that either Ahab or Jezebel or both had either paid these prophets to foretell good things, and perhaps their very lives were threatened by Jezebel as she had disposed of all the prophets who stood in the way of her and her husband. It is wondered if perhaps Jehoshaphat had been thinking secretly of Elijah. Since the judgement he had prophesied for Ahab, Elijah had not been seen. But here Ahab admits that there is one man who could prophesy but he hates him, because his prophecies do not tell of bright rosy pictures for him. So he sends one of his servants to get him and on the way the servant instructs Micah to say the same thing that all the rest have said. Micah by the way is not the Micah we know as one of the minor prophets, since Micah lived a century and a half later. So Micah comes before the two kings and prophecies exactly the same thing as the others. But Ahab is quick to sense that Micah is not telling the truth but is more or less mocking him. So Ahab has stuck his chin out and asked for the truth and Micah obligingly gives it to him. He predicts that an evil spirit has caused the other prophets to lie, and that Ahab will die in this battle. This infuriates one of these prophets so much that he strikes Micah on the face. At this the king commands that Micah be put in prison and fed only bread and water until he returns safely. Then Micah puts the icing on the cake and replies that if Ahab does return then God did not speak through him.

But Ahab is unwilling to not go through with his plan and he makes the necessary arrangements to go ahead. But he is a little worried, so he decides to use a disguise and perhaps the Syrians will not see him. But the Syrians are anxious to dispose of Ahab and they attack Jehoshaphat thinking it is Ahab. When they discover their mistake they seek him elsewhere in the battle. But unfortunately for Ahab one of the soldiers shoots an arrow which pierces between two pieces of armor where they meet, and Ahab is mortally wounded. During the course of the day he dies. They carried their dead king back and buried him in Samaria. The chariot which had become full of his blood during the day was taken to the pool at Samaria and washed, and the dogs licked the blood, and the prostitutes of Samaria washed and bathed in it as Elijah had predicted. So this was the end of the reign of a

king who had built cities, and ivory palaces, and who had fought like a hero against the enemies of his people, and yet, he never knew how to rule his own house. This is the story of Ahab and how he refused to listen to the words of God.

Now we can take this story and make some startling comparisons. In our present country and in our present day world can you see anything that should hit home to us? There are several things of which I thought when I was doing some research for this sermon. The first was the mottoes or slogans which we use so frequently and so familiarly. We take the story of the Pilgrims and we wrap it up in a nice little package and we school our children all of our schools, especially around Thanksgiving, about how they came over here to worship God as they saw fit. And how our country was founded upon the principle that, "In God we trust." We are one nation under God. Now of course these things are all true. I am not disputing that, nor am I disputing that they should not be taught to our children. But what I am disputing is the fact that we as a nation have become many, many steps far removed from being a nation under God. The God too many people think of is the one that is mentioned on our currency, and only because of the fact that the more of this paper or coin we have, the bigger and better we are. But who is kidding who? The standards that our very wise forefathers worked so hard to make a certainty in our lives and the lives of those who follow after us, are slowly being done away with. We have removed prayers from school, because we must not subject someone's child with something his parents don't want to believe. Mustn't tarnish the mind of one families kids, but think nothing of the fact that one of the founding principles of this nation slips down the drain.

Then think for a minute how the name of God is so irreligiously used throughout our land. During the Republican convention we heard the name of God slip in several times. We shall probably hear it several more times this coming week when the Democrats convene, and we will probably hear it a few more times during the campaign. It seems to be the thing to do. Mention the name of God and you are sure to get the votes of the Church people. And even if there are some unbelievers in the crowd they probably won't be offended, because the name of God and His Son for that matter are sullied and used so irreligiously every day, that

we have become accustomed to its use in our lives. Aren't we after all "one nation under God?"

Then think for a minute if you have not heard the phrase, "God is on our side.." Every time we get into a little conflict or a big one, we want to justify the loss of lives and the wasting of human beings by stating that we are doing it for God. Our cause is just. After all in God we trust. But is God actually leading us in the destruction of life and property and other creatures of God? I have often wondered this and perhaps you have too. The message of the New Testament and the message of the Old Testament clash right at this point. The New is a Gospel of love and the Old is a Gospel of an avenging God. It is difficult to believe one and disbelieve the other. But the only thing we can do is to accept both and maybe not question the motives of God down through history. The really important thing for us to do is to not jump to the conclusion so quickly that God is for us, and against everyone else.

Then there is one disturbing thought about our nation. There have been arguments that no prophets have come forth since the ones we know and read of in the Bible. If this is true then God has ceased to work in the world. There have been prophets down through the centuries and there are prophets today, and there will be prophets in the future. We can be certain of this. There are those who would or will argue with this thinking, but, we cannot see the prophets if we do not recognize them for what they are. Would you say that there is anyone who is a prophet in our nation today? I would, and I believe him to be Billy Graham. He pointed out several years ago that we are decaying from within. And what is going on in our nation today? Are these signs of health and security? He prophesied that our government would contain people who were not the God fearing people they should be. And what do we have in many, many areas of our government? We need but look around us and we can see that our nation needs not only prophets, but we need to heed their advice.

The story of the four hundred prophets telling Ahab that God was with him has a parallel in our nation also. In each one of the churches in our land is a pulpit. From this pulpit is supposed to come prophetic preaching. In many parts of our land this is not being done. Preachers have abandoned this role

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for one of being experts on everything from politics to war strategy. Now I am not saying that I am a prophet, but I am saying that this pulpit as well as all others should be used for the spreading of God's word and for no other purpose. To do anything else is to not be doing the will of God. We need to each one become a little more concerned with where we are going and where we are headed as a nation. The only saving grace that can come to us as a nation is to instruct and to teach children about God and perhaps the future generations can undo some of the harm that has been done. But in the meantime you and I can do all that we can to combat the ungodliness we encounter by the living of the Christ centered life. This is our duty and this is our responsibility as a Christian. God grant that we can be equal to the task. Let us pray.